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LETTER

TO THE

Rt. Hon. CHARLES JAMES FOX,

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[PRICE EIGHTEEN-PENCE.]

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Rt. Hon. CHARLES JAMES FOX,

UPON THE

DANGEROUS AND INFLAMMATORY

TENDENCY

OF HIS

LATE CONDUCT IN PARLIAMENT.

by Bentley. Esq.

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A

LETTER

TO THE

Rt. Hon. CHARLES JAMES FOX.

SIR,

WERE it not for the peculiar circumſtances of theſe times, under which it ſeems to have been reſerved for men to grow formidable by the decay of their influence, and to derive additional importance from the decline of their credit and character, it would not have been neceſſary for me to have troubled you with this addreſs at this conjuncture. The ſeceſſion of your friends would have left you without power to be hurtful, and your weakneſs would have proved your protection.

BUT ſince there has ariſen a new and unknown danger to the Conſtitution of theſe Kingdoms;

ſince a party has been formed in ſecrecy and ſilence, not to deſtroy its balance by giving preponderance to any one of its parts, as has ſometimes been attempted, but with ſuch open and avowed hoſtility to the ſyſtem itſelf as to threaten the whole of our eſtabliſhment with diſſolution and ruin; ſince the turbulence and diſcontent of the ignorant and ſeduced part of the ſociety has burſt forth in ſo many partial acts of inſurrection and tumult, and ſeems to wait only for a leader to begin the central and regular attack; there is much to apprehend from diſappointed and deſperate ambition; and it ſeems reaſonable to fear, leſt, rejected and abandoned by the perſons with whom you have ſo long acted in public life, you ſhould attempt to regain the ſituation you have forfeited, or to repair the connexions you have loſt, by other means than thoſe of penitence and conceſſion.

YOUR talents, Sir, if you ſhould chuſe to proſtitute them in ſo abandoned a cauſe, will always render you a formidable opponent, not only to any Adminiſtration, but to all, not only to Governments, but to Conſtitutions. You may become the MIRABEAU of any Revolution; your abilities, your ambition, and your diſappointments, ſeem already to inſpire hope into the enemies of your country, and there is nothing which can ſave either it or yourſelf but your virtues.

IN

In examining into the ſituation of this Country, and defining the dangers to which it is expoſed, it is to theſe that I ſhall frequently appeal; and in ſpeaking of the duties of Engliſhmen, I ſhall take the liberty to remind you more particularly of yours, who have long occupied a poſt as honourable as any ſhe has to confer, and as worthy of enlightened ambition to deſire; a poſt which, if not the higheſt in the State, is, if I may be excuſed ſuch an expreſſion, ſomething very ſuperior to the ſecond; and which offers as many occaſions of deſerving well of the Public, and perhaps more of uniting their admiration and eſteem (occaſions, Sir, which you have frequently ſeized, and rewards which you have often enjoyed), than, perhaps, would have fallen to your lot had you been in more complete poſſeſſion of your wiſhes, and intruſted with the firſt executive office of the Government.

But to controul is at leaſt as glorious as to direct; and the deference which your Country has almoſt conſtantly paid to your opinion was but the more honourable to you, as you were removed from the means of influence and the authority of office. The confidence of the Public ſeemed to attach to your perſon, and you held your reputation, and the power you derived

from it, independent of favour, and liable only to change from cauſes which could alone proceed from yourſelf—your own neglect, imprudence, or ambition.

If ſuch a poſt has its honours, and you know, Sir, they are too great to have been often well exchanged for any others, it has its duties too; and theſe of ſo much dignity and importance, of ſo ſerious and ſacred a nature, that it may well be doubted, whether the occupation of any other in the kingdom be attended with ſo great and moral a reſponſibility as this is. Bound by no oath, and amenable to no tribunal, the chief of an Engliſh Oppoſition is called to that high pre-eminence by the ſilent ſuffrages of the Country; for they would deceive you, Sir, who would tell you, that you hold it of this Houſe or of that, or of an union of families, or that you were elected to it by the party over which you appear to preſide. Thoſe who ſupport the Government, as well as they who oppoſe it, have at leaſt confirmed your election, and all have been ready to acknowledge your ſervices, and confeſs to have profited by your advice. Not a party, but the kingdom itſelf have voted you to this moral chancery, where you ſit to check and controul Adminiſtration on the one hand, and to inſtruct and enlighten the people on the other. It is but

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one half of your duty to oppoſe wrong councils, it remains for you to give vigour and efficacy to the beſt; for as, on the one hand, the people naturally confide in your vigilance and fidelity to reſiſt whatever may be hoſtile to their intereſts; ſo, on the other, they expect that you will join in all ſuch meaſures of Adminiſtration as are either neceſſary or beneficial to them; and that, far from oppoſing or retarding, from a jealouſy of power, or even of benefits, you will ſet them the example of content and unanimity.

It is hard to ſay, whether the leader of a party in the Houſe of Commons would moſt deſert his poſt, and moſt betray the duties of his ſtation, by aſſenting to illegal or dangerous meaſures, or by oppoſing ſuch as were legal and neceſſary. The crime is certainly the ſame, and a greater crime it is difficult to imagine; but the ill conſequences might be more or leſs fatal, according to circumſtances which it is impoſſible to define. The Fate of Liberty and the Salvation of the Kingdom may depend upon either.

Having ſaid thus much of the nature and importance of your ſituation, it would be natural to aſk you, Whether it be ſuch as to be lightly abandoned, or faſtidiouſly exchanged for the tranſient

tranſient popularity that ſeems to court you? and, Whether there be any thing in the fame of a BAILLY, or a PETHION, or in their power either, that a man like you ſhould envy? But I muſt haſten to ſpeak of the ſituation of the Country, without which it would be impoſſible for me to explain the tendency of your late conduct, or to recommend to you with the energy and the ſucceſs which I hope for, a better and a happier road to glory than that which lies through the aſhes of the Conſtitution, and is to be cut thro' the ruins of your Country.

IT was early foreſeen that the Revolution which had been effected in a neighbouring kingdom, and the doctrines and principles which had been diſſeminated with ſo much induſtry among the moſt numerous claſſes of ſociety, had a tendency to introduce a love of novelties, and to relax the antient attachment of the people to the form of the Government, and even to the Orders which compoſed it; and it was apprehended beſides from the ancient treachery and ill-diſſembled antipathy of that country, that it would not ſcruple to ſeduce and inflame the minds of the people, and to prepare and kindle the fuel of diſcontent and inſurrection. Already had the preſs teemed with inflammatory publications, and clubs and meetings

ings were formed, that openly correſponded with the ſeditious ſocieties of France, who applauded their proceedings, and diſperſed at a conſiderable expence ſuch writings as were moſt likely to encourage the flame. Sedition and inſurrection were reduced into catechiſms, manuals, and vade-mecums, and the ſcience of rebellion was digeſted into portable volumes and pocket-books, and adapted to every man's purſe and capacity. Early in the ſpring, the attention of Government was directed towards this alarming object, and the King's Proclamation * appeared to have been attended with the moſt ſalutary effects. A Club in particular which aſſembled under a very ſpecious name, ſeemed to be virtually diſſolved by the ſeceſſion of its moſt reſpectable members, the moſt diſtinguiſhed of whom thought it neceſſary to juſtify himſelf with great anxiety to the County which he repreſented, and abjured with much publicity the opinions which he had been ſuſpected to entertain. If other gentlemen thought proper to remain longer in the ſociety, it was hoped that they expected a more favourable opportunity to withdraw; and it was conſidered that the general expreſſion of the ſenſe of the country, as well as the particular remonſtrances of their own friends and connections, could not fail to bring them

* May 25th, 1792.

back

back to a more temperate and conſtitutional line of conduct; and much was to be pardoned, as, in fact, little was to be apprehended—from the eccentricities of their unexperienced ambition. Your conduct, Sir, in particular, who had never condeſcended to belong to this meeting, was peculiarly and deſervedly applauded, and men were willing to ſee nothing but civility and good-humour in the obliging expreſſions you thought proper to uſe towards perſons with whom you declined to co-operate. In the mean time, addreſſes replete with expreſſions of loyalty and attachment to the Conſtitution poured in from every quarter of the kingdom, and the public tranquillity appeared to be ſeated upon the firmeſt baſis which it was poſſible to find, conſidering the fermentation that had ſpread all over the Continent, and the impending war in the Low Countries, the events of which ſeemed likely to deſtroy the balance of power, and threatened the Independence of a great part of Europe.

The Government, ſenſible of the importance of peace, by which it had already been enabled not only to diminiſh the public burthens, but to extinguiſh a part of the national debt, deſired nothing ſo much as its continuance: it relied for internal tranquillity, not only upon the late general aſſurances of content and ſatisfaction,

tion, but upon the great proſperity of the kingdom, and the increaſing happineſs of the people; and having already recovered its aſcendancy in the political ſcale of Europe, it could ſcarcely apprehend that it would be wantonly provoked or inſulted by any Power; and leaſt of all by that in particular which had already called for the good offices of Great-Britain with its allies *, and dreaded the acceſſion of Pruſſia and the United Provinces to the quarrel of the Court of Vienna.

It is a fact within my own knowledge, that the conduct of the Engliſh Government at that period gave great ſatisfaction at Paris. Far from being tempted by the opportunity of revenge, or ſeduced by the hope of aggrandizement, it ſeemed to have forgotten the treachery of France in the late war, in which ſhe had taken part in our civil diſſenſions, and at the peace, when ſhe enriched herſelf by tearing from us many of our moſt valuable poſſeſſions, which ſhe divided, without ſhame or decency, between herſelf and her allies. Acknowledging without reſerve the principle, that every nation poſſeſſes the right to legiſlate for itſelf, it abjured all claims and pretenſions to interference, and engaged itſelf to the ſtricteſt and moſt impartial

* Official Note of Monſ. de Chauvelin to Lord Grenville, June 18th, 1792.

neutrality; and even promiſed its good offices to procure the return of tranquillity as ſoon as its mediation ſhould become acceptable to all the belligerent parties, without which it would be perfectly uſeleſs *.

They either want good faith or good information who would endeavour to miſrepreſent the conduct of the Engliſh Government upon this occaſion, and to interpret its declining to aſſume the character of a mediator into a coldneſs or averſion to the new Government in France, to which, as long as it could be confounded with the cauſe of Liberty, or miſtaken for it, not only the Adminiſtration but the whole Country were friendly. It is not to you, Sir, that it can be neceſſary to prove, that a mediation which is undertaken at the deſire of one of the contending Powers, and not at the common ſolicitation of both, is nothing leſs, let diplomatiſts call it by what name they will, than a menace, and a conditional declaration of hoſtilities againſt the party which ſhall refuſe to accept of it, or to agree to the ſtipulations it determines to impoſe.

On the part of France, it was declared by Monſieur de Chauvelin, that the " rights of all

* Lord Grenville's Note in anſwer, July 8th.

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" the allies of Great-Britain who ſhould not " have provoked France by any acts of hoſtility, " ſhould be reſpected by that Power;" and it is not only in the name of the King, but of the people of France, that he declares, that " every " war is eſſentially unjuſt which is not made ne- " ceſſary by the duty of a lawful defence *."

On the tenth of Auguſt the Executive Power was ſuſpended by the Legiſlative Aſſembly, and Lord Gower ſoon after withdrew from Paris, leaving a Secretary of legation.

It does not appear that the withdrawing of our Ambaſſador gave, at that time, any offence to the Executive Council; and if it did, it could only be attributed to its ignorance in diplomatic affairs. Indeed, it was not till after the memorable thirtieth of September, when the Duke of Brunſwick retreated from the plains of Champagne †, that the infant but aſpiring Republic

* June 18th, 1792.

† The curioſity of the world has been exerciſed in its higheſt degree to explore the cauſes of this unexpected event. It has been aſſerted in the firſt political circles, and even declared by an Engliſh nobleman, that the Duke of Brunſwick proteſted at Bruſſels with tears in his eyes, that " he had not been corrupted by Dumourier, and that poſterity would do him juſtice." —*Credat Judæus!*—The next ſuppoſition which has met with

public began to meaſure itſelf with Great-Britain. Since this period it has renewed with redoubled vigour its correſpondence in the kingdom; it has received at its bar deputations of diſcontented and mutinous Engliſhmen; it has declared itſelf the ally of all nations who ſhould be deſirous to ſhake off their antient government; and it has given every ſpecies of encouragement to faction and inſurrection wherever it

any great degree of credit is, that this ſecond-rate politician had the addreſs to alarm the King of Pruſſia with regard to the fidelity of his allies, and repreſented to him the Emperor of Germany and the Empreſs of Ruſſia as confederated to fall upon his dominions, and reduce him to the original inſignificance of the Houſe of Brandenbourg.—But there is one circumſtance I have heard lately aſſerted with ſo much confidence, and of ſo wonderful a nature, that before I aſſign the true reaſon of this extraordinary retreat, I ſhall take ſome ſlight notice of it. The King of Pruſſia is a Catechumen of the *Illuminés*, and generally ſuppoſed to be well verſed in the profound ſecrets and myſteries of *Francmaçonnerie*. There is a favourite after-piece very much demanded at Paris, called "Les Deux "Pages," in which the celebrated Fleury repreſents Frederick the Second. The reſemblance between the late monarch and the actor is exceedingly uncommon. This circumſtance inſpired the profound Dumourier with the thought of making Fleury act that part with the King, which Mademoiſelle Oliva had performed ſo well with the Cardinal de Rohan. Fleury did not fail to diſſuade the King from the war, and the Duke of Brunſwick retreated by the command of the ghoſt. I ſhall not conteſt this point with *Meſſieurs les Illuminés*, I revere their profound ſcience, but I am perſuaded by the actual alliance of the Courts of Vienna and Berlin, and their joint proſecution of the

it found it, and employed its emiſſaries and the remains of its wealth to create diſcontent, and nouriſh the deſire of change and Revolution, not only in our towns and populous cities, but even in our villages and the cottages of our poor. There is no man of plain ſenſe who doubts that France has actually been in a ſtate of hoſtilities with England during ſeveral months paſt, if the pacific ſpirit of the Government had not diſſembled, as long as it was able, the of-

the war, that the King of Pruſſia treated the advice of the ſpectre with all the contempt it deſerved. In fact, when a king is once fairly dead and buried, he has no right to come and take the command of his ſucceſſor's army, nor to beat a retreat in an enemy's country. If there are any perſons inclined to diſpute this extraordinary ſtory, which I can aſſure them it is thought vulgar to doubt of, I ſhall preſent them with a plain fact, which it will not rack their credulity to believe.

On the 29th of September orders were given by the Duke of Brunſwick Lunenbourg to put the Pruſſian army in order of battle. From the diſpoſitions then made, all military perſons that I have converſed with, whether French or foreigners, have agreed, that Dumourier's army muſt not only have been beaten but cut off. But theſe orders were ſuddenly countermanded, upon information given to the Duke by the commander in chief of the artillery, that there was no ammunition in the camp, and that the magazines could not ſupply powder for half an hour's ſervice of the artillery. This gentleman, it is preſumed, had been gained by Dumourier: he is actually a priſoner in the caſtle of Spandau, where he is to be tried ſhortly, with eleven ſubaltern officers implicated with him in the ſame accuſation. His name is *Templehoff*, and he is a Colonel, which is the higheſt rank of engineer, as I underſtand, in the Imperial army.

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fences, the inſults, and the injuries we have received. Whether it be owing to this forbearance on our part, or to the intoxication of ſucceſs, which, operating upon the natural vanity of Frenchmen, has produced a fanaticiſm of the moſt extraordinary nature and deſcription which has ever appeared in the world, I will not take upon me to determine. But, encouraged probably by the one and decided by the other, the Executive Council ſeems to have conſidered our Government not merely as neutral, but as negative, and to have looked upon our moderation as the effect of fear or aſtoniſhment. Having endeavoured to bind our arms by internal diſſenſions, or at leaſt to turn them againſt one another, it proceeded in the moſt unequivocal and audacious manner to threaten our allies; and aſſuming, upon I know not what metaphyſical pretence, to break the connections and diſſolve the treaties that connect the great Republic of Europe together, it declared itſelf determined to open the navigation of the Scheldt to Antwerp, which involves the ruin of Holland, and ſuppoſes the total inaction and diſhonour of England.

But the Government, attentive to the progreſſive uſurpations of France, and deſirous to prevent an attack on the one hand, or to inſpire the neceſſary

neceſſary courage into our allies on the other, had officially aſſured the United Provinces * of its reſolution to adhere to the Treaty of 1787, and maintain them in their juſt right to the controul of a river, which, flowing to the ſea through the territories of the Republic, was undoubtedly ſubject to their dominion, if the Treaty of Munſter, and ſo many others which confirm it, had never exiſted. In this right they had been guaranteed by France in the year 1785 †. That Court had meditated an accommodation between them and the Emperor, who, availing himſelf of the misfortunes of the Republic, and the juſt reſentment as well as the weakneſs of Great-Britain, pretended as ſovereign of Brabant to open the navigation of the Scheldt from Antwerp to the ſea; a claim which was conteſted by the Court of France, and by the Comte de Mirabeau, who, then reſident in London, employed his talents to perſuade the Miniſtry of his country to maintain the faith of Treaties, and defend the rights of the Dutch againſt this extraordinary invaſion; a circumſtance peculiarly worthy of notice, ſince by the Revolution of 1787 we ſtand in the place of France with regard to the United Provinces, and are bound to ſecure them in thoſe rights to

* November 16th.

† Treaty ſigned at Paris Sept. 20th.

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the guaranty of which we have ſucceeded by the treaty of that year. But it is not my intention to enter at preſent more deeply into the diſcuſſion either of our obligations or our intereſts with regard to the protection of Holland: in the courſe of this Letter an opportunity will offer itſelf for me to inquire into them with more exactneſs, and to take them into the fulleſt conſideration.

I HAVE now, Sir, ſketched out the ſituation of the Country during this eventful year; and though I have cautiouſly abſtained from colouring my picture, I may hope that it will preſent, with force and clearneſs, the great outlines of the deſign. You will ſee, on the one hand, a great and generous nation diſdaining to profit by the misfortunes and miſconduct of a weak and guilty neighbour, diſſembling affronts and injuries, endeavouring to guard itſelf from dangers by its internal regulations and prudence, and ſtifling the voice of reſentment, till leſſer States, which depend upon it for protection, are expoſed to invaſion and conqueſt from a baſe miſconſtruction of its magnanimous forbearance; and, on the other, you will contemplate a wild and madding people, with no force but their numbers, no power but their crimes, treading back the ſteps of barbariſm, and precipitating them-

themſelves without thought or foreſight towards conqueſt and extermination; reſtrained by no ties, no compacts, no morality; invading and deſtroying every thing; diſtinguiſhing neither friendſhip, enmity, nor neutrality; pretending to give laws which it ſpurns, and liberty which it knows not, to the nations it ſpoils and ravages; diſſolving the bands of the civil union, and tearing aſunder the ties that unite men together in ſtates, cities, ſocieties; trampling upon duty, religion, allegiance, patriotiſm; whatever has been held ſacred or been found uſeful to mankind; you would contemplate this people polluting and poiſoning the ſources of public information, blowing up the coals of ſedition, and ſpreading misfortune and contagion round them, till all Europe, held in ſuſpenſe and anxiety at home, and occupied in allaying civil wars and diſſenſions, ſhould not dare to look abroad to check the progreſs of their conqueſts, or interpoſe between their ambition and the ruin and diſperſion of its members: at leaſt, Sir, this is what you would have beheld, if I had been a faithful painter, or poſſeſſed any part of your imagination and abilities.

Such was the critical ſituation of affairs: the rapid victories of the French arms, and the fanatic opinion of their invincibility, had given

courage to the ſeditious at home; and the hope of internal diſſenſions had inſpired confidence back again into the French, till Holland ſeemed expoſed without protection to the enterprizes of that people, and the attention and forces of Great Britain in danger of being confined and circumſcribed to defend the internal tranquillity of the realm; when Government, no longer able to palliate or diſſemble the danger of our allies, or that which more immediately threatened ourſelves, had recourſe to the means with which the Conſtitution has intruſted the executive power for the defence of the country, by embodying the militia of ſeveral counties. The wiſe jealouſy of our Conſtitution has provided that the Crown ſhould never exert this important prerogative at a time when the Parliament ſhould not be aſſembled, without being obliged by law to ſummon it within fourteen days after the iſſuing its orders to the lords lieutenants of counties. The alarm was general over the kingdom, the public funds experienced a rapid decreaſe in their value, individuals aſſociated all over the kingdom for ſafety both to their perſons and property, and to defend this admired Conſtitution; againſt which, for the firſt time, the ſophiſtry and impudence of conceited ignorance and vanity had declared an open attack, and hoping an alliance from the diſcontent and unhappineſs

happineſs ſcarce ſeparable from the lower orders of mankind, had conceived the idea of a regular ſiege, and openly talked of the probability of a ſurrender.

Such, Sir, was the ſituation of the kingdom when the Parliament met. The eyes of all men were turned towards it, and towards no part of it ſo much as yourſelf. The temperate conduct you had obſerved in the ſpring, the negotiations and explanations which were known to have taken place during the ſummer, and a general good opinion which men who ſuſpected the violence of your temper, entertained of the goodneſs of your heart; the extraordinary danger of the country, its ſafety expoſed at home, its honour compromiſed abroad; the moral antipathy all good men bear to crimes, and the enormity of thoſe which had been perpetrated during the receſs, and were actually perpetrating at Paris; every circumſtance and appearance of affairs promiſed the moſt entire union, the moſt honourable and patriotic coalition of parties. It was thought ſo worthy of a generous mind to ſupport the dignity as well as the intereſts of its country; it was conſidered ſo worthy of yours to extinguiſh the ill-founded expectations and vain deſires of the leaſt fortunate claſſes of ſociety; it appeared ſo great, ſo god-like, to

explain the true intereſts of the people, to recall or confirm them in their duty, to ſtrengthen the hands of Government in the cauſe of the people, and protect the glory of the Britiſh name againſt the treacherous and ungrateful enterprizes of its ambitious and implacable enemy; that your friends and your enemies expected with equal confidence its performance at your hands. I ſhall now take the liberty to remind you of the ſpecious or equivocal language you have held in Parliament upon this important occaſion; of its tendency and natural effect upon the people; of the encouragement it offers to France to perſiſt in her hoſtile intentions; to the diſcontented at home to perſevere in their projects; and, above all, of the bad and diſhonourable counſels you have given to your country.

It was clear to the moſt ordinary capacity, that France relied upon our internal diſſenſions to carry on her ambitious projects againſt Holland; and yet you aſſerted that unanimity upon this occaſion would be pernicious. To whom then would unanimity be pernicious but to France, and to the abettors of France? You denied the exiſtence of inſurrections at home, though the whole kingdom feels a general anxiety and fermentation, and trembles with ſubterraneous heavings, like volcanoes on the eve of erup-

eruptions; and you treated the fears of Government as a libel and calumny on the kingdom. What is the meaning of this equivocal language? How are we to pierce to the ſenſe which you have enveloped in more than oracular obſcurity? Is it a calumny upon the kingdom to ſay it contains traitors and rebels and confederates of France? Alas, Sir, this is but its misfortune; and it is not from you that we ſhall hear that the truth of it has exaggerated the libel. Were the Miniſter to have ſaid in the Speech that the whole kingdom ſhewed a ſpirit of tumult and inſurrection, it would have been a falſe and calumnious aſſertion; but is there no danger from treachery, none from bad men, becauſe the beſt and wiſeſt part of the people retain their loyalty to the Prince and their attachment to the Conſtitution? Was there no danger in 1715, or in 1745, becauſe the majority of the nation maintained the principles of the Revolution of 1688? And is there no danger now becauſe the vigilance of the Government and the ſpirit of the people have appeared ſufficient to check, if not to extinguiſh it? That danger would have been very little, Sir, if you had fulfilled the juſt expectations of the Country, and the Houſe of Commons had preſented the appearance of unanimity: that unanimity would, in all probability, have carried deſpair into the boſoms of

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our enemies; it would have defeated the views of the ſeditious at home; it would have protected Holland, and have been attended with the fruits of victory without the hazards and misfortunes of war. Or if it had failed of theſe ſalutary effects, and the ambition and avarice of France had perſiſted, in ſpite of it, in its ſchemes of invaſion, it would have encouraged our allies, and enabled us to yield them a more effectual, or at leaſt a more durable, ſupport.

"SHALL we declare war without knowing whe-
"ther we are to have commotions at home?"
This, Sir, is a queſtion you have put to Miniſters; and yet you are angry that, in proportion as the neceſſity of the war becomes nearer and plainer, they ſhould manifeſt a greater anxiety to prevent commotions at home. But you had done better to have put this queſtion to thoſe gentlemen who are in habits of correſponding with France, for they could anſwer you with the niceſt preciſion: they might, perhaps, have given an anſwer to your enquiry not exceedingly different from that which I ſhall take the liberty of offering. They might have told you, that we ſhould not be in danger of the war without the hope and expectation of the commotions; and if this hope of commotions were extinguiſhed, and the unanimity of the Country were

were evident, we ſhould be freed from the war. They who make the war reckon upon the commotions to impede our ſuccours, and detain our forces at home; and they who make the commotions depend upon the events and upon the expences of the war, to bring the ſpirit of diſcontent and inſurrection to its fullneſs and maturity, and ſubvert the Conſtitution by means of the impatience and unwillingneſs with which they have prepared the minds of the people to receive any new taxes or impoſitions.

The war without the commotions could offer no very tempting proſpects to the hopes of France; and the commotions without the war could promiſe no very important alterations in the ſyſtem of our Government to the ſpeculative or the diſcontented at home: unanimity, therefore, in the Parliament upon this occaſion was peculiarly deſirable, and I think I may add it was doubly expected; becauſe it was known that it would have given the completeſt contradiction to the promiſes which had been ſent from hence to Paris, and have irritated the Executive Council againſt their agents and emiſſaries who had deceived them with the falſe hopes of a rebellion in England; and becauſe it was ſcarce probable that they ſhould think of attacking the United Provinces, when they were convinced

vinced they ſhould be oppoſed by the whole forces of England.

UNANIMITY, therefore, would have been pernicious in the extreme; but to whom would it have been pernicious? To the views of our enemies and to the hopes of our traitors. It would have extinguiſhed the fire of ſedition on the one hand, and ſcarce have left us a doubt but between peace or victory. Either we ſhould not be attacked through our allies, or the unanimity of the nation would have afforded the greateſt proſpects of ſucceſs, and perhaps of advantage, in ſo juſt and defenſive a war.

THE next part of your ſpeech which I ſhall take notice of, is a paſſage which, I cannot help thinking, has a very ſtrong tendency to make the diſcontented in the three kingdoms look up to you as a leader of power, abilities, and experience, prepared to adopt their quarrel, and to preſide over their enterprizes.

" WHAT, it may be aſked (theſe I believe " are your words, Sir), would I propoſe to do in " hours of agitation like the preſent? I will an- " ſwer openly: If there is a tendency in the " Diſſenters to diſcontent, becauſe they conceive " themſelves unjuſtly ſuſpected and cruelly ca- " lumniated,

" luminated, I would inſtantly repeal the Teſt
" and Corporation Acts, and take from them all
" cauſes of complaint. If there were any per-
" ſons tinctured with a Republican ſpirit, be-
" cauſe they thought the Repreſentative govern-
" ment was more perfect in a Republic, I would
" endeavour to amend the repreſentation of the
" Commons, and to prove that the Houſe of
" Commons, though not choſen by all, ſhould
" have no other intereſt than to prove itſelf the
" repreſentative of all. If there were men diſ-
" ſatisfied in Scotland, or Ireland, or elſewhere,
" on account of diſabilities, exemptions, unjuſt
" prejudices, and of cruel reſtrictions, I would
" repeal the Penal Statutes, &c. &c.

" What inſtead of this is done? Suppreſs
" the complaint, check the circulation of know-
" ledge, command that no man ſhall read, or
" that as no man can kill a partridge under a
" hundred pounds a year, no man under twen-
" ty or thirty pounds a year ſhall dare to read or
" think."

This language, Sir, I hold to be highly in-flammatory; and I think it has a tendency (which no doubt you did not deſign) to encourage every ſpecies of diſcontent, and to make all diſcon-tented perſons expect you, ſome time or other,

to become the champion of their cauſe. You offer yourſelf pretty plainly to the Diſſenters, whoſe diſcontent you acknowledge; but you attribute it to unjuſt ſuſpicions and cruel calumnies. The King's Speech, therefore, is not a calumny upon the nation but upon the Diſſenters; and if this body felt itſelf ſo unjuſtly ſuſpected and ſo cruelly calumniated, ſince you are become their advocate, and an abler they could not have, let me aſk you, Sir, Whether it would not have been wiſer and honeſter to have counſelled them to purge themſelves from the ſuſpicion, and to have convinced the nation that they were perfectly well affected to the Conſtitution and Government; that they entertained no correſpondence, and relied upon no aſſiſtance from abroad, to wreſt by force, from the weakneſs of Parliament or the fears of Adminiſtration, the abolition of thoſe Acts, which, while it has wiſdom and liberty, it will continue to maintain? Let me aſk you, If the doctrines of ſome of the moſt reſpectable perſons amongſt them are not dangerous or hoſtile in an extreme degree to the Government and Conſtitution of theſe kingdoms? and whether it would not have given the great body of Diſſenters a much better and more honourable title to the confidence they claim from Parliament, if they had ſeized this oppor-

opportunity to abjure theſe opinions, and to give the nation a proof of their affection and attachment to the Conſtitution, by rejecting the aſſiſtance that was offered them from abroad, and proving that they would accept no advantages at the expence of a foreign war and a domeſtic commotion?

If the conduct of the Diſſenters had been more moderate upon this occaſion, I proteſt, for one, that I ſhould have felt myſelf more inclined and more warranted to have truſted them; but when I perceive that the country itſelf is indifferent to them, and that there are no means they will ſtick at to procure the ſatisfaction of their demands, I feel an involuntary impulſe to ſuſpect the good faith of their promiſes; and I conceive it to be a fatal treachery to the Conſtitution, to truſt them with any power which they can turn againſt it.

The cauſe of the Roman Catholics in Ireland, which you are alſo ready to eſpouſe, is preciſely the oppoſite to that of the Diſſenters; but you are ready to preſide over both. The Diſſenters are a minority in England, and toleration is all they can claim as long as there ſhall be a na-

tional religion; but the Roman Catholics are a great majority of the people of Ireland. The abſurd and fatal deſires of the Proteſtants of Ireland, which you alſo eſpouſed in their day, to become ſeparate and independent of the Engliſh Parliament, have thrown them into this fatal dilemma: Either they muſt depend upon England for the defence of their preſent eſtabliſhments, or they muſt yield over not only their power but even their eſtates, which are alike uſurpations in their origin, and were the fruits of victory and the forfeitures of misfortune.

If no time can extinguiſh claims, and if there are no rights but what are impreſcriptible, the Roman Catholics of Ireland have done well in preſerving their title-deeds to their lands; and when they are put in poſſeſſion of the Government, they will be guilty of a worſe blunder than has ever yet been reproached to the confuſion of their ideas, if they neglect to put themſelves in poſſeſſion of their eſtates. This Revolution, which I am not afraid to own is the juſteſt that can take place in the world upon the principles of impreſcriptibility, will involve the ruin of a million of Iriſhmen who are in poſſeſſion of the Government, and have eſtabliſhed their

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own laws and religion, by which means they have protected themſelves againſt the majority of the kingdom. Ireland has always been held as a conquered province, though the policy of this Country has been to diſſemble the nature of its tenure, and the ſofter title of Siſter Kingdom has ſucceeded to the odious pretenſion of conqueſt.

The Proteſtants of Ireland are an Engliſh colony, and by the policy and the power of England they have preſerved the dominion over the poſterity of the indigenæ of the ſoil: but with a more than Bœotian dullneſs, they have endeavoured to emancipate themſelves from protection; they have fled from ſafety, and withdrawn themſelves from the ſalutary power and controul of Great Britain. Let the Parliament of independent Ireland extricate itſelf from theſe difficulties into which it has precipitated itſelf; that of England is happily removed from the quarrel, and has no duty but to moderate in the conteſt, and to interpoſe its good offices to procure a final ſettlement and tranquillity.

You cannot therefore wonder if perſons who are unable to conceive why you alluded to the diſcontented in Ireland, or in Scotland, or

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(in that broad term you have made uſe of) "any "where elſe," unleſs it were that you were deſirous to encourage the hopes of thoſe who look only for a head to give weight and body to their deſigns againſt the Conſtitution of this kingdom, ſhould conſider this part of your conduct with extreme ſerioufneſs and apprehenſion.

As to the ſpeculative opinions which may be entertained in the kingdom hoſtile to our ſyſtem of government, you aſſert that they are of the "very eſſence of liberty:" but ſpeculative opinions may as well be entertained in Japan or at Conſtantinople, as at London or Amſterdam; you muſt mean therefore to ſay, that the liberty of publiſhing ſpeculative opinions hoſtile to our ſyſtem of government is the very eſſence of liberty; and a more falſe or a more dangerous principle was never advanced, more falſe in fact, or more dangerous in its relation to the preſent dangers that ſurround us.

It is certainly of the eſſence of liberty that no Officer of Government ſhould interfere to ſtop the thoughts of men in their way to the preſs; but it is a falſe inference that the publication of writings hoſtile to our ſyſtem of government are therefore legal, and an abſurd one that they are of the eſſence of liberty: it is of the eſſence of

liberty

liberty that one abuſe ſhould not be checked by a greater abuſe, and the publication of treaſons is deſervedly conſidered as a leſs and preferable evil to an "*imprimatur.*"

But the moment ſuch a publication has appeared, the crime which it was not ſafe to prevent has been committed, and the ſale and diſperſion of it becomes criminal too. Far from any State or Conſtitution whatſoever tolerating the propagation of doctrines which are calculated to impair the reſpect and affection which ought to be borne towards it by the people, and which are neceſſary to its protection and preſervation, I believe I may venture to aſſert that it is a crime in every nation under heaven, and is the greateſt of all in our own.

The people therefore, Sir, are not forbid to read or to think, but it is forbidden to corrupt and poiſon the mind of the people, and diſturb the repoſe and order of ſociety. The capacity of the people (for whom I have not leſs reſpect than you, Sir) is not ſo able as you are to ſeparate truth from error, and to detect every ſpecious falſehood which is gloſſed and fineered over with the appearances of truth. The effects of ſome of the falſeſt and moſt abſurd doctrines upon their underſtandings is already viſible in ſo alarming a de-

a degree, as to afford a ſtrong proof that they are not to be truſted with every book which it may be of "the eſſence of liberty" to publiſh; and to make it probable that they are not all of them of opinion with you, Sir, that the "Rights of Man" is a libel upon all government; ſince ſome of them ſeem to conſider its author as their true friend and philoſopher, and few of them are able to diſtinguiſh between abſtract truths and principles, and the inſidiouſneſs with which it is recommended to have recourſe to them.

I AM not more a friend to Aſſociations than you, Sir, becauſe I think that the advantage they can produce is trifling and tranſitory, and the danger is ſerious and permanent: I think they have a direct tendency to draw away the attention and confidence of the people from Government, and a remote one to uſurp upon its functions, and aſſume powers that are otherwiſe delegated by the Conſtitution. Still leſs do I approve of ſuch abſurd and ridiculous combinations as publiſh the exploded jargon of Jacobitiſm, and reject the new Republic of France, not becauſe it is defiled and polluted with blood, but becauſe it is not anointed. Perſons ſo weak and ſo infatuated, ſo ridiculous and childiſh, ought to eſcape not only puniſhment but ſatire, for they are unworthy of being treated with any

ſpecies

ſpecies of argument, and are beneath even contempt; but you cannot ſurely confound the innocent abſurdity of this ſpecies of treaſon with the artful and methodical deſign of ſubverting the Government by means of the diſcontents of poverty and the repinings of labour; of involving the nation in a war in order to give hope to rebellion at home, or in rebellion to give a chance of ſucceſs to our enemies in the war. The treaſons of Mr. Chairman REEVES are not quite of ſo black and dangerous a deſcription as the doctrines of PRIESTLEY and PAINE; nor is the Aſſociation at the Crown-and-Anchor likely to prove ſo hoſtile or ſo fatal to Government and the Conſtitution (the love of which, probably, it imagines it to be more important at this conjuncture to inculcate, than to examine all its details), as the Executive Council of France, which is both able to comprehend and to deſtroy them.

THE love of the Conſtitution is compared by Lord BOLINGBROKE to the charity of the Goſpel, which covers a multitude of ſins. According to this noble writer, all faults may be forgiven to a ſtateſman who ſhould poſſeſs this ſingle virtue; and all qualities, all merits, all ſucceſſes, cannot be pleaded in pardon of him who ſhould want it. You are conſcious of this, Sir, and therefore you profeſs your allegiance to it, and

your admiration of its wonderful ſtructure, which you thank God was not made in a day, but is the reſult of gradual and progreſſive wiſdom. Let us take care, Sir, that it be not deſtroyed in a day; and let us join, if you would not diſdain ſo humble an aſſociate, to diſarm or to diſcredit all thoſe who would bring it into danger, under whatever pretence; whether they affect to admire and to wiſh well to it, and then detail its imperfections, its abuſes, or deficiencies, and exaggerate theſe imperfections, abuſes and deficiencies, till they can infer that it ought to be abolished and deſtroyed; whether they ſay with Mr. PAINE, that we have no Conſtitution at all; or with other perſons, whoſe names I will ſpare while I have hope of their contrition, that the Conſtitution is nothing but ariſtocracy and injuſtice. You know, Sir, that the Conſtitution with all its abuſes is the beſt ſyſtem of government that has ever been deviſed by human invention; and ſince we cannot at preſent reform it without endangering the whole of it, let us wait till our enemies abroad will give us leiſure to begin this ſalutary work, and let us not enter upon it at a time when ſuch an occupation would abandon our allies to their enterpriſes, and throw us into a ſituation in which we ſhould have to contend not for our Conſtitution, but for our fields, our fires, and our altars.

It is now time for me to take notice of the Motion you have made in the Houſe of Commons for "addreſſing his Majeſty to ſend a Mi-"niſter to Paris, in order to negociate with the "preſent Government of France relative to their "diſpute with Holland."

The baſeneſs and enormity of ſuch a propoſition have been ſufficiently expoſed in the anſwers you received from your friends and your opponents; it is not my intention to follow them; nor is there need of any efforts of mine to convince the people of England that the friendſhip of the French Republic ought not to be purchaſed by our concurrence in the murder of Lewis the XVIth and his family. The ſpirit of the country is awakened, and, thank God! there is no danger of Great Britain becoming the—Ally ſhall I call it? Oh! no, Sir,—the Accomplice of the Parricides of France.

But why ſhould we negociate, if it be true, as you have aſſerted, that the navigation of the Scheldt is not an object for which even the Dutch themſelves would wiſh us to undertake the war? And what negociation, if we are to negociate, can be more effectual than the Official Declaration * that we will protect the rights of the

* November 16th.

United Provinces, and the preparations which we are making to give effect to it?

What Miniſter (if any man qualified to be a Miniſter could undertake this negociation) could ſay more, or have more to ſay, than what is ſaid in the Declaration, or threaten more, than to protect our allies?

The whole negociation is in the ſpirit, and ought to have been in the unanimity of the Country. The French underſtand no law but that of force, and have no fear but that of reſiſtance.

I am not, Sir, of the opinion of an Honourable Gentleman, who would go to war becauſe the French have deſtroyed the elegant monuments of antiquity. Were I to counſel a war of vengeance, it ſhould be a vengeance againſt their crimes, not their follies. I would vindicate the works of God, not of man; not of art, but of nature. It ſhould not be the ſtatues they have mutilated, nor the pictures they have defaced, for which I would demand reparation; I would take an account of the murders, of the maſſacres they have committed; of the cruelties they have offered to the living, and of the inſults to the dead; of their outrages againſt the human form, againſt the human mind; againſt the privilege of ſex, and the

the delicacy of nature! Still leſs can I think with that Honourable Gentleman, that "this "Country was never ſo able in regard to "ſtrength and reſources, and that the direct "contrary is the caſe of France." I would not diſſemble the difficulty or danger of the war, becauſe I would not have it undertaken lightly, or lightly abandoned. I would have the people ſee the juſtice and the neceſſity of the war, that it may willingly contribute to its unavoidable expences, and be able to bear with fortitude any poſſible reverſes to which we are liable. Our enemies expect, that as ſoon as the Government ſhall be obliged to demand aſſiſtance from the purſes of the people, the war muſt be abandoned, from their unwillingneſs or refuſal to contribute: and ſurely it is better the people ſhould abandon their allies while they may yet find a ſpecies of ſafety in ſubmiſſion, than deſert them in the middle of a war, when they ſhall have provoked their invaders by reſiſtance, and irritated their conquerors by acts of hoſtility, and perhaps of deſpair.

THE reſources of England are, no doubt, as great as ever they were, provided there exiſted that unanimity in the Country, without which it is impoſſible to call them into action. The real reſources of France too, no doubt, are exhauſted, but

but they have one of a formidable nature, and whoſe force it is difficult to calculate, in the enthuſiaſm and fanatical ſpirit of their armies. The perpetual and unaccountable ſucceſſes they have met with againſt the beſt diſciplined and beſt provided armies of Europe, are proofs too ſtrong to be queſtioned, that if we have war, we are to expect oppoſition; and if we have oppoſition, we are liable to checks and reverſes. I cannot, however, think this enthuſiaſm will ſurvive the ſucceſſes they meet with, or enable them to bear defeat, and make head againſt misfortune. But it will not be improper here to take ſome notice of this wonderful fanaticiſm, and to enquire whether it be of ſuch a nature as to warrant all the hopes and all the apprehenſions that are entertained of it by the different parties who are intereſted in the event.

I HAVE been led to turn my thoughts very much to the enthuſiaſm of the French armies, becauſe I perceived that people relied more upon it in France, and were more aſtoniſhed and intimidated by it in other countries, than appeared to me to be reaſonable. Thoſe who mean by enthuſiaſm nothing more than an extraordinary degree of eagerneſs in any particular cauſe, will naturally recollect that the French nation has never been remarked for the conſtancy

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of its taſtesor attachments. It is the nature of warm minds to exhauſt their paſſions quickly, and to abandon projects with the ſame precipitation with which they adopt them. In this ſenſe we may ſpeak of an enthuſiaſm for NECKAR, MIRABEAU, or LA FAYETTE, but I think not with propriety for any cauſe, ſyſtem, or principle, whether moral, religious, or political. But the enthuſiaſm which we are to ſpeak of is, in the ſenſe of the chiefs of the French philoſophy, an extreme ardour and energy in the cauſe for which they are engaged, a ſelf-devotedneſs in its favour, a blind courage and confidence of ſucceſs. This is neither a true nor a natural definition of enthuſiaſm, yet as it is the only one conſiſtent with its own tenets their philoſophy can ſupply, it is in this light that we ought to examine it; and it will be eaſy to perceive, by comparing it with ſuch inſtances of other enthuſiaſm as hiſtory will preſent to us, how little calculated it is to produce the ſame effects, or to create the ſame fervour and perſeverance.

FANATICISM, no doubt, has made its conqueſts in the world as well as prudence and diſcipline, but it ſeems only then to have been crowned with a ſolid and final ſucceſs when it has been conducted by art and ambition, and when it has been an inſtrument, or at leaſt an auxiliary,

auxiliary, to other deſigns. Enthuſiaſm is defined to be a vain belief of a private revelation, a vain confidence of divine favour, or of an intercourſe with the Supreme Being. It muſt therefore excluſively belong to religious and pious perſons, and is the reaction of faith upon the mind, which, making its own convictions meritorious, preſumes upon ſome immediate acceptation and reward from above. Such might have been the enthuſiaſm of Mahomet, but that of his ſoldiers was of the moſt fatal and irreſiſtible kind: their acceptation was, indeed, one degree farther removed from Heaven, to whoſe peculiar favour and protection they could not think they had any other pretenſion, than as they were faithful and obedient to him whom they believed to be its favourite and elect. Beſides, therefore, that contempt of life and danger which they derived from the hopes and promiſes he held out to them, their fanaticiſm ſecured their ſubordination and diſcipline; for their doubts and even their fears were infidelity, and their diſobedience was impiety and ſacrilege.

THE enthuſiaſm that led our anceſtors to Paleſtine, though it originated in ſimilar opinions, was not capable to produce equal effects; becauſe though the ſoldiers of the Croſs had ſet life with all its endearments at nothing, when oppoſed

oppoſed to the crown of martyrdom they expected in the quarrel, or at the tomb of their Saviour, yet the link of enthuſiaſm was broken; and it was not certain that every movement or command of GODFREY or RAIMOND, of RICHARD or PHILIP, was the reſult of inſpiration; nor was it eaſy to diſcern, in their diſputes, which party was favoured or diſtinguiſhed by Heaven.

THE prayers, the maſſes of GODFREY, the humiliation and faſts of the chriſtian armies, were not calculated, beſides, to inſpire that ardent confidence, that elevated zeal, which were kindled in ſo extraordinary a degree by the bold promiſes and confident aſſurances of MAHOMET.

THE fanaticiſm of the Druids and that of the Peruvians, beſides their phyſical and moral inferiority to their enemies, had this peculiar diſadvantage, that it could only be exerted in defence: and polytheiſm is, beſides, in its nature incapable of exciting it in its greateſt degree; becauſe though a Pagan may believe himſelf to be in the higheſt degree of favour with his God, he cannot be ſure but that his enemy may be alſo protected by ſome other Deity in an equal or ſuperior degree. WODEN and THOR were not idle in the defence of our anceſtors, but they were overpowered by JUPITER and MARS, juſt

as the temples of ATHALIBA were compelled to admit the deities of FRANCIS PIZARRO. The conteſts of all ignorant nations appear to have been ſtruggles between their reſpective gods; and the Jews themſelves, notwithſtanding their pure theiſm, were inclined, upon every defeat and diſaſter which happened to them, to ſuſpect that the gods of their neighbours were too powerful for their own.

THE followers of CROMWELL, as well as of MAHOMET, had a ſtandard in heaven as well as upon earth; and they were led on by generals, who, though they preached or propheſied, knew well how to ſecure all human means of ſucceſs, and to direct to the moſt uſeful purpoſes that fanatical ſpirit which they knew how to excite: they calculated its force with preciſion, and were able to regulate and govern its movement; to confine it within the exacteſt limits of diſcipline and obedience, or to let it forth with reſiſtleſs fury upon their aſtoniſhed enemies. Though they fought for conqueſt or for liberty, yet they fought for Heaven too; and, what was of more conſequence, they thought that Heaven fought for them; and they believed that thoſe who ſhould not ſurvive to ſhare in the triumph, would be tranſported to ſeats of immortal bliſs, and rewarded with thoſe eternal

eternal pleaſures, or that crown of glory, which were deſtined for the faithful who fell :

——————————— inde ruendi
In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces
Mortis, & ignavum redituræ parcere vitæ.

I NEED not recall to your memory, Sir, the effects of this genuine enthuſiaſm; nor do I ſee any reaſon to expect, or rather to dread, a repetition of them from that which is under our conſideration. It is not every thing which is viſionary that can inſpire it, nor is every opinion that is vain and metaphyſical an equally good baſis upon which to rear this Coloſſus of fanaticiſm. Equality is, no doubt, as illuſory a promiſe as the paradiſe of MAHOMET, or the reign of the Saints upon the earth; but it is not ſo well calculated to abſtract and abſorb all the faculties of the mind : it entertains no pious ambition of celeſtial diſtinctions; it nurſes no fond reveries of rapturous delights and extatic enjoyments; it neither broods with melancholy and meditation, nor expatiates with imagination and fancy; its hope is vulgar and its promiſe common; and for its martyrs there are neither palms, nor banquets, nor unfading crowns, nor ever-blooming Houries.

THE enthuſiaſm, therefore, of the French armies ſeems to me to be nothing more than the natural reſult of ſucceſs; for I am able to diſco-

ver no principle which is likely to ſupport them under defeat, diſgrace, or diſappointment. Indeed enthuſiaſm and atheiſm are irreconcileable terms; and ſince irreligion has carefully been inſtilled into them, as a ſpecies of opium to lull their rebel and unphiloſophical conſciences to reſt, or preſented to them as a ſpunge which could alone efface from their memory the crimes they have been lured to commit, it appears to me clear, that there exiſts for them no alternative between complete ſucceſs and complete ruin, and that even the ſuſpences of victory are the beginnings of doubt and remorſe, of defeat, deſertion, and deſpair.

I HAVE been the more particular in this enquiry, Sir, for a reaſon I have mentioned before—Becauſe I would not have the people of England undertake a war of ſucceſs, but a war of principle; I would not have our perſeverance to depend upon our victories but our rights, and upon the neceſſity we all ought to feel of defending, under any fortune, our allies, our intereſts, and our honour.

I NOW come to enquire into your aſſertion, that even the Dutch themſelves would not wiſh us to undertake the war, to ſecure them in their excluſive right to the navigation of the Scheldt.

You

You know, Sir, as well as any-body, that Holland will never defend this navigation for itſelf, becauſe it reckons that no peace can be made in Europe without placing it upon the footing upon which it has remained ever ſince the peace of Weſtphalia in 1648. It will therefore content itſelf with protection againſt the violation of that and ſubſequent treaties which confirm it, as it did in the year 1785, when the Emperor JOSEPH the Second attempted the ſame uſurpation which is now the object of the French Republic. The proteſt was ſufficient for Holland, becauſe it knew that its ally, whether it were France or England, muſt be ſenſible that the alliance, inſtead of an acceſſion of force, would become a heavy charge, if the navigation was made free up to Antwerp. It knew that, poſſeſſing the territory upon both banks of the Scheldt towards its mouths into the ſea, it had the ſame right to impoſe duties or prohibitions, and in a leſs queſtionable ſhape, than what is practiſed by the King of Denmark in the paſſage of the Sound; becauſe Denmark poſſeſſes only one of its ſhores, and becauſe there is a mighty difference between the mouths of rivers which may and frequently do ariſe in one kingdom and flow through another, and the keys of an immenſe Mediterranean which waſhes the coaſts of many independent nations, and is

not

not only common but neceſſary to them all. It knew well beſides, that the Low Countries, with the acceſſion of freedom to the port of Antwerp, would be an acquiſition too vaſt to any of the leading Powers in Europe, to be quietly ſubmitted to by the others. Reſolved therefore never to become the principals in a war upon this account, they have long determined to ſubmit to momentary ſuperiority, and to let the queſtion decide itſelf by the arms or negotiations of the governing States of Europe. When they belonged to France, they experienced the "good offices" of France; becauſe France was aware that they could not yield this freedom of the Scheldt even to ſo contemptible a maritime power as the Emperor, without not only loſing the value of the Dutch alliance, but eſtabliſhing a dangerous rival in commerce and politics upon their own frontier. The eagerneſs of the Emperor to acquire commerce and naval conſequence, is compared by M. DE MIRABEAU to the peeviſh deſires of a child that cries for the moon. Yet the loſs of the trade and wealth of Holland, at that time the ally of France, appeared to him and to the Comte de VERGENNES (the greateſt miniſter, or at leaſt the laſt great miniſter that France has poſſeſſed in the preſent century) to be of ſo much importance to the intereſts of France, as to require the interpoſition of all its "good offices;"

" fices ;" by which I ſuppoſe you mean, Sir, the drawing of its troops to the frontiers of Auſtrian Flanders, and marking it out a camp for eighty thouſand men in the plains of Lens. Of what conſequence ought it then to appear to us, who muſt not only loſe its poſitive value in the power and wealth of our ally, but who muſt ſee it added to the enormous preponderance of our enemies? The juſtice is exactly the ſame with regard to us in the preſent moment, and to France in the year 1785. Each of us have alike felt the *duty*, and acknowledged the *engagement* and the *neceſſity* to protect our ally; but the intereſt and the policy are ſo much more cogent with us, as France is already the greateſt naval and commercial State after our own, and we ſhall not by our ſupineneſs or our cowardice aggrandize an inland Sovereign ſighing after the moon, but an ambitious maritime Power that would monopolize the ocean itſelf.

I DO not think it neceſſary to prove the great intereſts which the Dutch have in this right; they were ſtated with great force and preciſion in the conferences at Bruſſels in 1784*; and they have never been controverted, ſo far as I know, by any perſon intitled to an anſwer, if I except that ſpecies of indirect contradiction which you have

* Auguſt 23.

given

given to them in an aſſertion, which I am not willing to believe you could ſeriouſly or deliberately have permitted yourſelf to have made. Theſe intereſts have been acknowledged and eſtabliſhed, together with the right, by a ſeries of treaties which have ſucceeded one another in the courſe of nearly a century and a half, in which no material alteration has been made with regard to them, and in which almoſt every Power in Europe has by turns become their champion or their guarantee.

THERE remains only one point upon which I ſhall take the liberty of detaining you any longer. It is the oppoſition you have given to the Alien Bill, and the objections you have ſuggeſted to it in Parliament. It is there only that I preſume to conſider your conduct. Your enemy might purſue you to your Clubs and Aſſemblies; but the friend of his country will draw a veil over thoſe licentious meetings, which are a diſgrace to the age as well as to you, Sir. With me your treaſonable toaſts, your ſeditious eloquence ſhall find every excuſe that can be pleaded for the intemperance of wine, or the contagion of ſociety; and indeed, while they are confined to thoſe tumultuous circles of your partizans and dependents, they do not appear to me to be attended with all the danger that ſome perſons apprehend from

from them. They may influence, it is true, but they cannot corrupt; they may lead to crimes and violence, but they cannot *miſlead. Summa venire et audire culpa.* The law holds, I believe, Sir, that an injury cannot be done to him who conſents to it, nor a rape be committed where there is a deſire to be ſeduced. I remember too, that it was a maxim of the Penal Code of our German anceſtors while they were yet in their foreſts, though even there they had a Government, an Order, and a Conſtitution, that crimes only ſhould be expoſed in their puniſhment, while vice and flagitiouſneſs were carefully concealed from the public eye.

In Parliament, then, you have oppoſed a prudential law that was loudly demanded by the juſt fears of the whole nation, which could not behold without apprehenſion the extraordinary and ſudden influx of foreigners, and was beſides alarmed and provoked by the knowledge, that amongſt them were concealed many of the principal actors in thoſe bloody tragedies of France, which no man has condemned more emphatically, or lamented, I do not doubt, more ſincerely than yourſelf. You aſſerted, that there was no neceſſity nor occaſion for this Bill, though you knew that about eighteen thouſand foreigners had ſuddenly taken refuge in the country.

Theſe, you ſaid, were harmleſs men; but you diſſembled that they were mixed with ſpies, with emiſſaries, and incendiaries, and that the object of the Bill was to enable Government to diſtinguiſh between the perſecuted refugee and the hired aſſaſin; you diſſembled that the real Emigrant deſired and implored the Bill, and that it could only be an object of terror and diſlike to the diſguiſed traitor, who profaned the aſylum and violated the hoſpitality of the country! Give me leave to aſk you, Could you blame the ſuſpicions of ſuch as beheld with anxiety and horror the protection you accorded to the outcaſts of the human race, to men diſguſting with blood and familiar with maſſacres, to public murderers, to the hangmen of Revolutions? Can you wonder that, in proportion as your arguments are echoed and your name applauded in that *immoral* and *impure* Convention which deluges its country with crimes and miſery, you ſhould decline in credit in the Senate of England? Can you complain that, while you are the hero of BRISSOT, and the admiration of that accurſt aſſembly of plunderers and parricides, you ſhould forfeit your influence and aſcendancy in a Britiſh Parliament? Can you complain of deſertion, can you complain of abuſe and malice? Alas, Sir, you are celebrated by atheiſts and regicides, what calumny

lumny can you dread, what libel remains for you to pardon?

It is true, indeed, that you could not well foreſee the ſtupidity of thoſe Miniſters of the new Republic, who, relying implicitly upon your ſagacity, have puſhed your arguments to an extreme of abſurdity that, I think, is only to be found in one diplomatic paper in the world: I will ſubmit it to you, Sir, than whom no man is a better judge, and than whom, I ſincerely believe, no man is more diſintereſted or impartial; it is ſigned "Chauvelin," and was preſented to Lord Grenville on the 7th of January 1793.

This Miniſter, in the name of his Republic, accuſes the Britiſh Government of having infringed, by the various clauſes and proviſions of the Alien Bill, the IVth article of the Commercial Treaty. He ſays, that the Executive Council of France "had a right to expect, knowing the reli-"gious fidelity of the Engliſh people in fulfilling "their engagements, that the French would be "poſitively exempted from this law."

Now, Sir, this ſolicitude of the French Republic for the eaſe, convenience, and ſecurity of its Emigrants in England, is of ſo ſingular a nature, that it would not be unpleaſant to con-

traſt it with the various requiſitions to diſarm, to diſband, and to baniſh them, which have been made by the National Aſſembly and Executive Government in ſo many other States of Europe where they have attempted to find protection and ſecurity. The injury offered to a nation by meaſures of hardſhip or ſeverity towards ſuch of its ſubjects as it affects to conſider as rebels, as it proſcribes and puniſhes with death, is, certainly, not eaſily to be comprehended; and is, I think, Sir, with ſubmiſſion to your better information, now, for the firſt time, aſſigned in a ſtate-paper as a cauſe of complaint and the ground of hoſtilities. France declared war againſt the Houſe of Auſtria, and has invaded its territories in the Low Countries, as well as the Free Towns and Epiſcopal States of the Empire, for an imputed favour and protection accorded to its Emigrants; and it is ready to declare war againſt England for diſarming, for watching, and even for ſuſpecting them. And all this, becauſe in the year 1786, while it had yet its antient and legal Government, it had been ſtipulated between the two countries, "That "it ſhould be free for ſubjects and inhabitants "of the reſpective ſtates of the two ſovereigns "to come and go freely in ſecurity, without "any permiſſion or paſſport, general or ſpecial, "either by land or ſea, and to return, ſojourn, "or paſs, and alſo to purchaſe or acquire, as

"they

" they ſhall chuſe, all things neceſſary for their " ſubſiſtence or their uſe, and they ſhall be " treated reciprocally with all ſorts of kindneſs " and favour," &c. &c. &c.

If, the moment after this treaty had been executed, the French Court, inſincere and ambitious, but not more inſincere and ambitious than the nation (for nothing is more abſurd than to reproach Miniſters with crimes foreign to their age and country), had determined to ſend over eighteen thouſand picked ſoldiers, we were bound, no doubt, by the letter of the treaty to have ſupplied them with all things neceſſary for their uſe and ſubſiſtence, and to have treated them with all ſorts of kindneſs and favour. To have diſarmed them, to have demanded their motives, to have aſked for their paſſports, would have been an infraction of the IVth Article of the Treaty of Navigation and Commerce, and would have ſurprized the French nation, " who " ſo well knew the religious fidelity of the En- " gliſh people in fulfilling their engagements." Good God, Sir! did this egregious Miniſter never imagine that ſome one among us would demand, Whether it were more probable that the French Executive Council would intercede with Great Britain, and even go to war with it, for the ſake of Emigrants whom it has plundered,

dered, perſecuted, and proſcribed, or for the aſſaſſins whom it employs, encourages, and rewards?

The moſt inveterate of your enemies, Sir, could ſcarce ſuſpect you of an unity of heart, but to imagine you had a communion of councils with ſuch blunderers as theſe, is a calumny upon your underſtanding, which no man can poſſeſs malignity or credulity enough to believe.

But it will not be improper to inquire how the Engliſh have been treated in France ſince the Revolution, notwithſtanding the reciprocity of the IVth Article of the Treaty of Navigation and Commerce.—Have they not been ſubjected to paſſports, to examinations, to domiciliary viſits, to the moſt jealous and the moſt rigorous police? Have not their arms, their horſes, and even their ſaddles, been forcibly taken from them? Have they not been carried before municipalities and magiſtrates, and forced to give the minuteſt account of themſelves and their motives? Have not their features been noted down, their ſtature meaſured, their hand-writing witneſſed? Have women, have Ambaſſadors been reſpected? Have not theſe Miniſters, who are ſacred in every country under Heaven where there

there are names for law and polity, been retarded, inſulted, and menaced? Have not Engliſh officers and gentlemen been maltreated and impriſoned for endeavouring to ſupport them by their preſence and councils, and to defend the rights and the honour of their nation committed in the perſon of the King's Miniſter, and the violation of his diſpatches? His Majeſty's ſervants, who accepted ſatisfaction for thoſe injuries, were not inſenſible to the indignity offered to the Britiſh nation, nor the violation of the treaty, but they knew that the unforeſeen circumſtances, the dangers and diſtractions that agitated a kingdom, might well excuſe to its neighbours the proviſions of an internal police, and the rigours which were exacted by a juſt foreſight or a real neceſſity.

I HAVE ſtated theſe circumſtances at ſome length, and with more preciſion than I ſhould otherwiſe have thought neceſſary, had it not been for the diſſimulation and perfidy with which ſome perſons have endeavoured to conceal all the real cauſes of the war, and to found them excluſively in I know not what *ill-will* or antipathy of the King's ſervants to the principles of the French Revolution; a Revolution which was foſtered in its beginning by the vows of all orders, diſtinctions, and parties in the State, but which,

which, in proportion as it has developed and diſcovered itſelf, is likely, I fear, Sir, to become fatal for many years to the cauſe of real liberty all over the world, by the fears, the hatred, and the horrors it has inſpired during the ſeries and progreſſion of its crimes, and which are now probably riveted for ages in the minds and memory of man, by the conſummation of the moſt barbarous, unjuſt, unneceſſary, and impolitic murder, that diſgraces the annals of the human hiſtory, the manners of any nation, the morals of any age.

To return to the policy of the war, I muſt own, Sir, that if the right of the United Provinces, and if our own intereſts and duties be certain and evident, and if our enemies have no reaſon to preſume upon perpetual ſucceſs in their projects of violence and injuſtice, nor upon any perſeverance and conſtancy under the unavoidable diſaſters and misfortunes of the war, of which at length they are beginning to taſte; and if the ſeries and progreſs of their uſurpations from their invaſion of the rights of the German Princes in Lorraine and Alſace, of the ſovereignty of Avignon and Savoy, to their violations of the laws of nations and the compacts of neutrality at Frankfort and Geneva; and, finally, if their menaces and violence againſt

our

our own neareſt allies have not frightened us out of our acknowledged good ſenſe and our national character, I can ſee no good reaſon, Sir, why we ſhould not declare a war of principle, and a war that muſt become popular in proportion as its juſtice and neceſſity become generally underſtood in the nation, unleſs the Executive Council of France, if it ſtill poſſeſſes any power over the Generals (for I confeſs I know not with whom it were beſt to treat, if we were inclined to it; whether with the Council or the Army; with the Convention, the Municipality, or the Mayor; whether with Pethion or Marat; whether at Paris or at Marſeilles); unleſs, in ſhort, the French people will abſtain from the invaſion of our ally, and give to ourſelves ſatisfaction for the baſe and hoſtile machinations they have carried on in the heart of the kingdom againſt its internal peace and ſecurity, as well as offer us a proper ſecurity to reſpect the faith of treaties, and conform to the law of nations for the future.

HAVING now concluded what appeared to me moſt important at this time to obſerve in the critical ſituation of our affairs, and having endeavoured to place the queſtion with clearneſs and preciſion in what I conceived to be its true point of view, will you permit me, Sir, to re-

vert to yourſelf, and to ſubmit to your ſerious conſideration, Whether a longer continuance in the line of conduct you have lately adopted be not likely to increaſe the ambition and add to the activity of our enemies, and to foment and encourage the projects of the ſeditious at home? Whether it has not a direct tendency to provoke complaint and to flatter diſcontent, and to revive every dangerous hope that ſeemed extinguiſhed by the King's Proclamation in May? Whether it may not expoſe us to the danger of the war from the appearance of diſunion at home, and to commotions at home, from the expectations that are entertained of the war? and, laſtly, will you give me leave to aſk of you, Whether you think the great and elevated ſtation you have ſo long enjoyed with the united applauſes of every party in the kingdom, with the univerſal approbation of your country, can be well or virtuouſly exchanged for the opprobrious honours of a Club or an Aſſociation? Will you deſcend from ſuch an height to be celebrated by Mobs or to preſide over Factions? Will you quit this dignified, this glorious poſt for ſuch mean and precarious popularity? Surely it might ſatisfy every deſire of generous ambition, and tranſmit your name with the faireſt and beſt-earned honours to poſterity.—Return, Sir, return, to this bright pre-eminence; believe me

it

it is your place, you cannot ſo well become any other. You have ſhewn that you poſſeſs the magnanimity to forgive; can you want that magnanimity which teaches to accept of forgiveneſs? You have had the candour to confeſs your errors and to repair your miſtakes. While the nature of man ſhall be to be frail and imperfect, this virtue will approach the neareſt of all others to perfection. Be juſt then to yourſelf and to your Country; the breach is not yet irreparable between you; ſhe courts you once more to her boſom; her arms are ſtretched out to receive you; ſhe offers you her confidence, her affection; —but you muſt be contented with the honours ſhe beſtows and the place ſhe aſſigns you: greater are not to be deſired with innocence, nor to be enjoyed with impunity.

London, Jan. 26, 1793.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 8, line 3, dele ——
15, — 11, for *meditated* read *mediated*.
30, — 25, for *are* read *is*.